

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

WILDLIFE FEATURE

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### UNITED STATES ESTIMATED TO HAVE 1,000 NESTING PAIRS OF BALD EAGLES IN LOWER 48 STATES

The Interior Department's Fish and Wildlife Service today announced the results of its 1973 survey of bald eagle nests in the lower 48 States-- 627 active nests were located from which more than 500 young were produced.

From its findings, the Service estimates that the United States south of Alaska has about 1,000 nesting pairs of bald eagles, the same number estimated by the National Audubon Society in 1972. Earlier surveys are deemed too incomplete to provide valid comparative data for the entire U.S. Not all adult bald eagles nest, of course, and none do so before their fifth year of life.

Certain representative areas of Alaska were surveyed last year, and the results indicate that that State's bald eagle population is between 30,000 and 55,000 birds.

A report by the Service concludes that "the outlook for the future of the bald eagle is mixed." The report reveals that populations in Chesapeake Bay, parts of Florida, the Pacific Northwest, and the northern interior of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan are holding steady now with some possible gains in the Minnesota population.

On the other hand, eagles in the Northeast, Great Lakes shores, and the Southeast (except parts of Florida and Louisiana) are either declining or gone. Nesting eagles are also virtually gone from Iowa, Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri, and other States along the Mississippi drainage.

The report identifies three basic reasons for losses of bald eagles:

- (1) Pesticide pollution which results in reproductive failure or direct mortality;
- (2) Habitat destruction and human disturbances or intrusions at nest sites that discourage nesting and interfere with incubation;
- (3) Shooting.

Reduction of losses in the first two categories is expected to occur because of the decline in the use of persistent pesticides and because eagle nests on Federal lands, particularly those administered by the National Park Service, the Forest Service, and the Fish and Wildlife Service, are relatively well-protected. Increasing numbers of nests on private lands are being protected by landowner agreements.

Additional educational and legal efforts are needed if losses from shooting are to be reduced, the report states.

During the 1973 survey, the Service received helpful cooperation from many sources, including the Federal agencies named, the National Audubon Society, State wildlife agencies, State and local conservation groups, and private individuals.

Survey work was done almost exclusively from aircraft, with some ground verifications also being performed. Two flights normally were made, the first to locate nests and the second to assess productivity by counting the number of young birds.

Another survey is planned this year. The 1974 goal is to locate 90 percent of the active bald eagle nests in the lower 48 States. Work already has started in Florida, where eagles begin nesting in late fall and early winter.

Prospects are good, the report indicates, that additional nests will be found in several States, notably Florida, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, Arizona, Montana, Idaho, and Minnesota.

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## 1973 Survey Results by Region

### Far West

Active nests		Young produced
California:	19	24
Idaho:	8	4 <u>1/</u>
Nevada:	No nesting reported for many years.	
Oregon:	47	42
Washington:	<u>25</u>	<u>16</u>
Regional Totals:	99	86

### Southwest

Active nests		Young produced
Arizona:	3	4 <u>2/</u>
New Mexico:	No nests located, but adults were observed throughout nesting season, thus suggesting possibility of nesting.	
Oklahoma:	No nests located, but two sites reported late in 1973 will be checked during the 74 survey.	
Texas:	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u> <u>3/</u>
Regional Totals:	7	9

### Midwest

Active nests		Young produced
Illinois:	0	
Indiana:	0	
Michigan:	83	66
Minnesota:	104	113
Ohio:	7	2
Wisconsin:	<u>108</u>	<u>107</u>
Regional Totals:	302	288

### South

Active nests		Young produced
Alabama:	2	Not known
Arkansas:	0	
Florida:	96 <u>4/</u>	77

1/ Only 2 nests rechecked for productivity.

2/ Only 2 nests rechecked for productivity.

3/ Texas figures are for 1972.

4/ Florida figures incomplete.

South (cont'd)

Georgia:	0	
Kentucky:	0	
Louisiana:	5	6
Mississippi:	0	
North Carolina:	0	
South Carolina:	2	1
Tennessee:	<u>0</u>	<u>—</u>
Regional Totals:	105	84

Northeast

Active nests		Young produced
Connecticut:	0	
Delaware:	3	0
Maryland:	32	26
Maine:	19	7
Massachusetts:	2	0
New Hampshire:	0	
New Jersey:	0	
New York:	1	1
Pennsylvania:	3	1
Rhode Island:	0	
Vermont:	0	
Virginia:	32	13
West Virginia:	<u>0</u>	<u>—</u>
Regional Totals:	92	48

West

Active nests		Young produced
Colorado:	0	
Iowa:	0	
Kansas:	0	
Missouri:	1	0
Montana:	14	5 <u>5/</u>
Nebraska:	1	0
North Dakota:	0	
South Dakota:	0	
Utah:	0	
Wyoming:	<u>6</u>	<u>3</u>
Regional Totals	22	8 known (see footnote <u>3/</u> )

Total for contiguous United States

523 young produced\*

62, active nests

\*See all footnotes

5/ Only 3 nests rechecked for productivity.

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